HOW REDUCING FRICTION & ANXIETY LED TO A 466% INCREASE IN CONVERSIONS

Conversion is more than just persuasive copy and attractive web design. Removing mental blocks and making tasks easier can have a profound impact a customer's willingness to convert.

How reducing friction & anxiety led to a 466% increase in conversions.

Hello everyone, its Brandon from Conversion Engineering. Today's case study revolves around the concept of friction. More importantly, how friction forms in the minds of your customer and keeps them from buying or becoming a lead.

Now, I typically define friction as anything that causes the conversion goal to be perceived as more difficult to achieve. This can be anything from a difficult to navigate layout, an overly long lead capture or order form, confusing instructions, etc. This is stuff I'm sure you have heard a million times before. To some extent, friction is one of the easiest things to optimize. The tell-tale signs that something is very wrong are usually fairly obvious. For this reason it makes sense that this is the most common thing marketer's address on their sites.

The problem is, most only address the easy stuff. Most sites contain what I call "hidden friction" and never realize the impact it is having on their visitors and bottom line.

Taking the time to understand hidden friction can easily lead to xx% and xxx% increases in conversions.

Two things you need to remember:

1. Friction does not occur on a web page, but rather in the minds of your customers.
2. It is typically much more complex than just page length, form length, etc. This is why most friction is "hidden".

Difficulty, and the perception of difficulty is what matters.

I can explain this better with an example so let's go ahead and jump right into our case study:

Case study #C100

Below is a real business that was advertising via AdWords and Bing. The branding has been hidden to protect their privacy.

Landing Page & Application Form:

Commonly Asked Questions

Does it cost money for me to apply with
No! It costs nothing for you to apply for a loan with

Do I have a good chance of being accepted?
Yes you do! We have a national network of lenders and dealer partners who get people loans everyday. Regardless of credit history!

I'm a self employed person, can I still qualify for a car loan?
Yes you can! Being a person who is self employed will not typically affect your approval for a loan.

Can I put zero money down?
We have a number of partners and programs that may allow you to put no money down on your car loan. Additionally, even if a down payment is required, you may be able defer part or all of the down payment.

I've had a car repossessed in the past. Does that mean I can't apply for a loan with
Not at all! You CAN still apply!! and our partners offer special loan programs that could help you even if you have a repossession in your past. It's our goal to help you get a loan even if you have a difficult credit situation!

What if I am going through bankruptcy or have gone through bankruptcy?
Even if you're going through bankruptcy or have a bankruptcy in your past, we may be able to help you! We have many lenders and partners in our network that specialize in vehicle loans for people who have gone through bankruptcy or are currently in the middle of a bankruptcy.

Can I get a loan for either a new or used car?
Yes you can! Our lenders and partners offer car loans for both new and used cars!

Get Pre-Approved. No Obligation!
Warning: Applictions with false information cannot be processed.

Apply in 60 seconds

Date of birth:
Month ▾ | Dav ▾ | Year ▾

Credit history:
▾

Bankruptcy in the last 7 years?
▾

Type of Employment:
▾

Occupation / Job Title:

Current Employer:

Time with current employer:
— ▾ Years   — ▾ Months

Monthly Household Income Before Taxes:
$ _____ .00

First Name:

Last Name:

Do you have a bank account?
▾

Do you rent or own your current residence?
○ Own   ⦿ Rent

Monthly Household Income Before Taxes:
$ _____ .00

Your Street Address:

Your Zip:

Time at Current Residence:
— ▾ Years   — ▾ Months

Monthly Rent or Mortgage Payment:
$ _____ .00

Down Payment For The Car?
$ _____ .00

Email Address:

Home Phone Number:
____ - ____ - ____

Work or Cell Phone Number:
____ - ____ - ____

Social Security Number:
____ - ____ - ____ 🔒

The purpose of this site is to capture applications for an auto loan.

What I liked about this site was they were already doing a number of things right. They had an attractive design, Clear calls to action that funneled visitors to the lead capture form, minimal distractions, decent headlines and copy, etc.

The issue was they were paying $3+ per click and their conversion rate was only 8-9%. Far from profitable.

Now typically, our conversion engineering process starts with some intense and in-depth market and customer research. However, because there were several obvious things I knew would help them, and because they were losing money so quickly, we decided to dive right in.

We started with the auto loan application itself.

I'm sure many of you already know what some of the big issues are.

1. A very long form.
2. A lot of form fields asking for very personal information.
3. Nothing explaining why the site needed that information.

Normally we can simply reduce the form to the 2-3 questions that are absolutely necessary and get an easy but substantial conversion boost.

The challenge with this form was that nearly ALL the questions were necessary. Because this was an auto loan application, not a lead form, they had to collect very specific information. Eliminating most of the fields was not an option.

Control & Treatment A

Again, here is the control:

Get Pre-Approved. No Obligation!
Warning: Applictions with false information cannot be processed.

Apply in 60 seconds

Date of birth:
Month ▾ Day ▾ Year ▾

Credit history:
▾

Bankruptcy in the last 7 years?
▾

Type of Employment:
▾

Occupation / Job Title:

Current Employer:

Time with current employer:
— ▾ Years   — ▾ Months

Monthly Household Income Before Taxes:
$ _____ .00

First Name:

Last Name:

Do you have a bank account?
▾

Do you rent or own your current residence?
○ Own   ● Rent

Monthly Household Income Before Taxes:
$ _____ .00

Your Street Address:

Your Zip:

Time at Current Residence:
— ▾ Years   — ▾ Months

Monthly Rent or Mortgage Payment:
$ _____ .00

Down Payment For The Car?
$ _____ .00

Email Address:

Home Phone Number:
____ - ____ - ____

Work or Cell Phone Number:
____ - ____ - ____

Social Security Number:
____ - ____ - ____ 🔒

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Here is the treatment we came up with.

Form Page 1

Form Page 2

Form Page 3

Form Page 4

Form Page 5

Any guesses as to which performed better? Any guesses as to how much better?

Page	Conv %	Diff %
Control	8%	-
Treatment A	20%	**150%**

So why did treatment A work so well

Well, the first thing we did was reduce the number of fields as much as we could. Since every field was required, we were only able to eliminate 2 fields. These two fields were city & state. Instead of asking for this information in separate questions, we are now asking for just the user's zip code and using a lookup database to find the city & state.

TOP TIP: Never ask for city, state, country, & zip in your forms. All you need is the zip or postal code and you can find the other information yourself.

Next, we simply reorganized the form into multiple pages. This is a tactic I'm sure everyone has seen before. However, simply having a few questions per page is not enough. There is a larger strategy here.

To reduce friction, we want to start by displaying 1 or 2 easy questions that don't require the person to think too much or divulge any personal information. Whenever possible, these first few questions should revolve around what the customer will get/wants.

In our example, we start by asking just one question. What kind of loan do you want? From there, we ask two more questions, then three, then four, then five. Each page progressively asks more and more personal information.

The idea here is people are much more likely to finish something they have started and invested time in. This principle is known as escalation of commitment.

By getting them into the form, they become more likely to answer the personal questions and complete the form.

These two changes gave us a quick 150% boost. Not bad, but not quite good enough. We knew we could do better.

Experiment 2

After collecting more data and watching how people interacted with the new form, we discovered a few questions had significant user drop-off.

We hypothesized that these questions were either confusing people, scaring them, or people just didn't know what to put down.

So we tested a few more treatments and settled on a variation that **created another 70% increase**.

Here is the new treatment:

Page 1

Page 2

Page 3

Page 5

Apply in 60 seconds

Get Pre-Approved. No Obligation!
Warning: Applictions with false information cannot be processed.

We need your information for 3 reasons:

1. **To contact you about the loan.**
2. **To determine your ability to pay the loan.**
   (income & job info)
3. **To review your credit history.**
   (less critical than ability to pay)

Progress:

Q: Why do you need my Social Security Number?
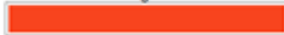
A: Your SSN is the only way to verify your credit history *(Even a poor credit history must be verified)*. The credit bureaus cannot give lenders the correct information about you without an ssn.

Also, your ssn is needed to ensure you are who you say you are, and that you haven't stolen the identity of someone else.

This is all critically important. If a lender is going to give you money to purchase a big-ticket item like a car, truck, van or SUV, they're going to want to make sure that the person they're dealing with is a real person.

Q: Is my Social Security Number safe?

A: Your information is highly encrypted via SSL technology at all times. It is virtually impossible for this encryption to be broken. SSL is by far the safest way to transmit information and is the standard across the world.

_____ will never see or store your SSN. Your information is securely sent from this form directly to potential lenders. Only lenders who wish to pursue your business and need to check your credit will be able to view your SSN.

With data encryption becoming the standard online, using a trusted web site can actually reduce the risk of identify theft. In fact, "paperless" transactions help keep your personal information secure.

Q: I'm still nervous about sending my ssn over the internet.

A: Remember, if you go to a bank or a car dealership to look for a loan they will still need your ssn to verify your credit & identity. They will do this by asking for you ssn & entering it into a website or online database.

As long as the connection is encrypted (like _____), it is impossible for your personal information to be intercepted.

You currently meet the requirements of _____ .
Please complete the form below to receive a loan offer.

Email Address:

Home Phone Number:

Work or Cell Phone Number:

Social Security Number: (encrypted for your protection)

Yes I have read the privacy policy and terms of use and authorize your partners to check my credit report. (Required)

« Back   Finish »

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What did we do?

A. Prepopulated some questions with the most common answers.
B. Re-labeled (added examples) to some fields that were confusing people.
C. Explained in detail why we were asking for that information.
D. Added more explanation for the SSN field.

At this point you are probably thinking we were pretty happy with the results. And you are right! But, we still thought there was more we could do.

Yes form conversions were up, but what about the people who were leaving our landing page without starting the form? What was causing them to leave?

Some of our visitors were most likely just looking at options and not ready to fill out an application. But given the keywords that were driving traffic to the page, we knew there was still a group that was ready to apply but just weren't for some reason.

After talking to customers and analyzing other data points, we made one discovery that introduced a new hypothesis.

We hypothesized that some customers were leaving because they weren't sure if the site was able to make loans in their state/city. Apparently, enough customers had been burned by lenders with regional restrictions that they were leery of sending in another application.

Experiment 3
To test this hypothesis we made two changes.

A) Based on the visitor's IP address, we displayed their city, state at the top of every page on the site with a heading that read "We proudly lend to:".

This small change resulted in an **additional 32% increase** in conversions.

Conclusion

To wrap up, reducing friction and anxiety took this online form from **8% conversions to 45%!**

This is how industry leaders are made. If you want to be a major player in your space, you can't do it without understanding your customer and eliminating the perceived barriers that are in their way.

In a later case study, we will go over the 6 types of friction, poor eye path, divergent objectives, dissonant tone, distracting multimedia, discordant colors, disorganized content, in more detail.

So stay tuned!